

\_\_\_\_ JOINT RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_

INTRODUCED BY \_\_\_\_\_

(Primary Sponsor)

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA RECOGNIZING THAT MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE MEDICAL ILLNESSES; ACKNOWLEDGING THE PERVASIVE NATURE OF MENTAL ILLNESSES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON MONTANA CITIZENS; EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING THAT MONTANA CITIZENS HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR MENTAL ILLNESSES; STRESSING THE NECESSITY TO FUNDAMENTALLY TRANSFORM MONTANA'S MENTAL HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM; AND DESCRIBING THE OPTIMAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY.

WHEREAS, mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders that cannot be overcome through "will power" and are not related to a person's character or intelligence; and

WHEREAS, mental illnesses fall along a continuum of severity with the most serious and disabling conditions affecting 5% to 7% of Montana adults and 5% to 9% of the state's children; and

WHEREAS, more than 19 people in every 100,000 commit suicide every year in Montana, which is the second-highest suicide rate in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the stigma that often surrounds mental illness erodes confidence that mental disorders are real, treatable health conditions and enables continuation of attitudinal, structural, and financial barriers to effective treatment and recovery; and

WHEREAS, mental illness is the leading cause of lost years of productive life in North America; and

WHEREAS, mental illnesses strike individuals in the prime of their lives, often during adolescence and young adulthood; and

WHEREAS, the economic cost of untreated mental illness totals more than \$100 billion annually in the United States; and

WHEREAS, without treatment, the consequences of mental illness for individuals and society are unnecessary disability, unemployment, inappropriate incarceration, homelessness, fractured families, wasted lives, and suicide; and

WHEREAS, early identification and early treatment of mental illnesses are of vital importance in accelerating recovery and protecting the brain from further harm related to the course of untreated illness; and

1 WHEREAS, the best treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective, allowing between  
2 70% and 90% of individuals with serious mental illness to experience a significant reduction of symptoms and  
3 an improved quality of life; and

4 WHEREAS, a well-developed body of knowledge exists about mental illnesses and how to enable people  
5 with mental illnesses to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities; and

6 WHEREAS, today, the United States and Montana are on the threshold of achieving the promise of  
7 transforming mental health care in Montana; and

8 WHEREAS, the recommendations of the report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental  
9 Health provide the framework for transforming mental health care in Montana.

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11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
12 STATE OF MONTANA:

13 That the 60th Montana Legislature declares its intent to provide leadership in ensuring a future for  
14 Montana when mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, a future when mental illnesses are detected early,  
15 and a future when everyone with a mental illness at any stage of life has access to effective treatment and the  
16 support services essential for living, working, learning, and participating fully in the community.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 60th Montana Legislature concurs with the vision of the  
18 President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health that a transformed mental health care system focuses  
19 on recovery and is one in which:

- 20 (1) Montanans understand that mental health is essential to overall health;  
21 (2) mental health care is consumer-driven and family-driven;  
22 (3) disparities in mental health services are reduced;  
23 (4) early mental health screening, assessment, and referral to services occurs;  
24 (5) excellent mental health care is delivered and research is accelerated; and  
25 (6) technology is used to access mental health care and information.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 60th Montana Legislature applauds the significant efforts currently  
27 in progress throughout Montana that are building a foundation for transformation through the collaborative efforts  
28 of consumers of mental health services and their families, providers of mental health services, advocates, the  
29 Governor's Office, and staff members of the Department of Corrections, the Department of Public Health and  
30 Human Services, and the Montana Board of Crime Control.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 60th Montana Legislature endorses the development of a  
2 comprehensive statewide mental health plan that includes collaboration among state agencies in identifying and  
3 coordinating all agency activities with a mental health component and that involves an effective blending of  
4 resources.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to President  
6 George W. Bush, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Governor Brian Schweitzer, U.S. Senator Max  
7 Baucus, U.S. Senator Jon Tester, and U.S. Representative Dennis Rehberg.

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